

BRIAN K. VAUGHAN FIONA STAPLES

Sadako

CHAPTER
NINE



HotComic.net

CHAPTER
NINE

Saga

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Fair question.



We've been over this, The Will.

Slave Girl belongs to **Sextillion**, and regardless of your feelings about our more junior employees, you can't just take one from here without paying for --

Only gonna warn you the once to step aside, Mama Sun.



Why are you tough guys so obsessed with prepubescent girls, anyway?

If you're thinking about making her some kind of contract-killing **apprentice**, don't bother. I assure you, Slave Girl is a lover, not a fighter.



Already got a partner.

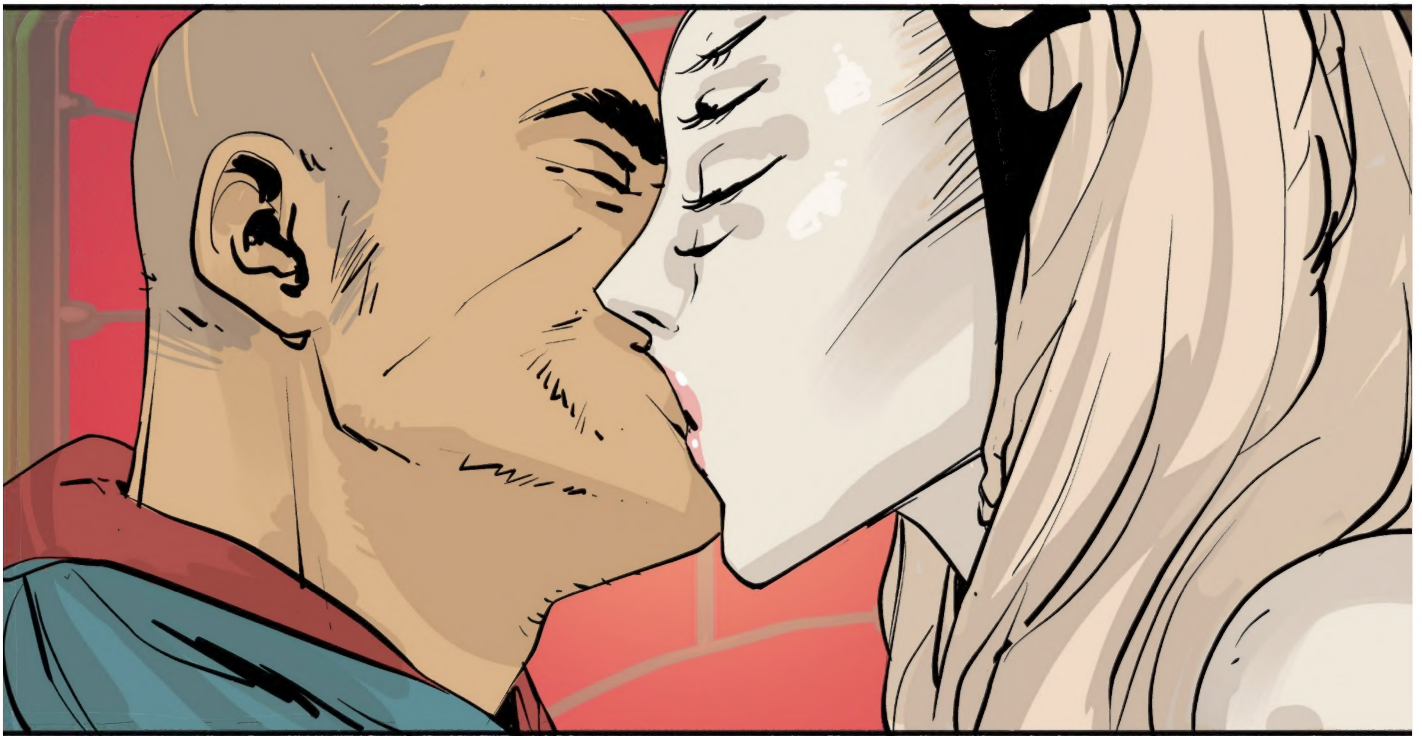
Yes, well, too bad your big pussy didn't warn you against coming back here unarmed.



Lying Cat is my Sidekick.

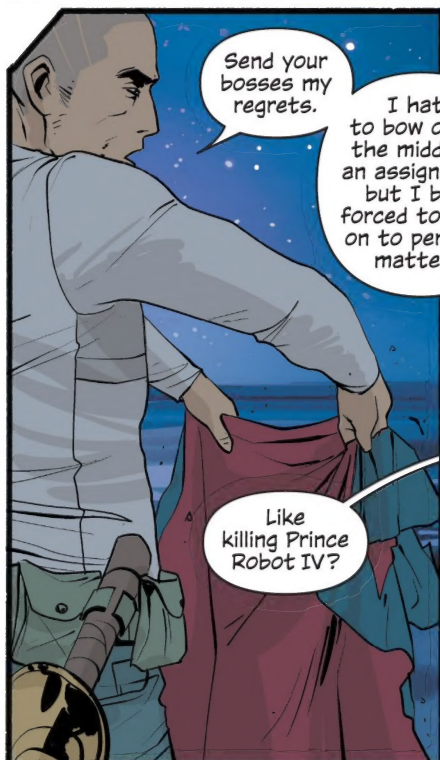
My **partner** just got back from sick leave.



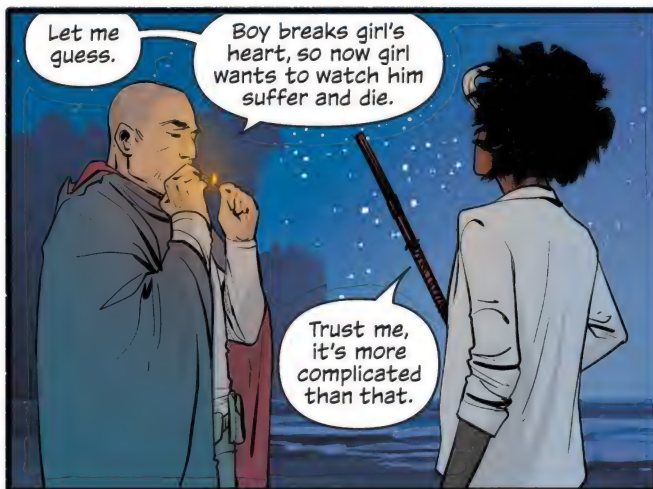


















Slave Girl.

Her parents aren't looking for trouble, just the safe return of their daughter. If you help us, no further action will be taken against you or your parent company.



And if I refuse?

We leak your quality-control issues to the press.

I'm sure every Landfallian veteran who's ever had a bachelor party on Sextillion will be thrilled to learn he may have accidentally stuck it in a "filthy moony."



...I'll have the girl's security elixir neutralized at once.

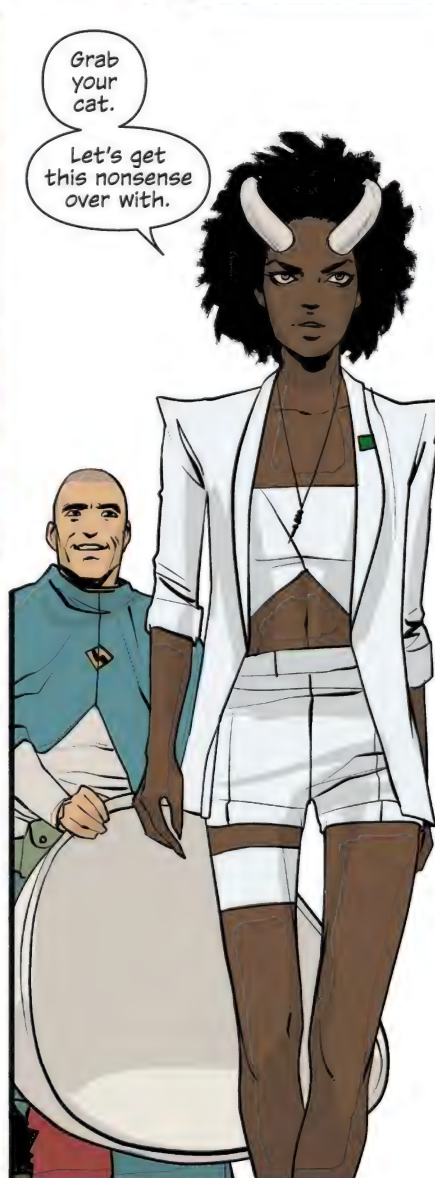


Your cooperation is noted. How soon can we retrieve her?

No, there's no way I'm letting **another** one of you set foot here.

My people will drop off Slave Girl outside the old refueling station on Indica. You can pick her up in an hour.

Call ended.

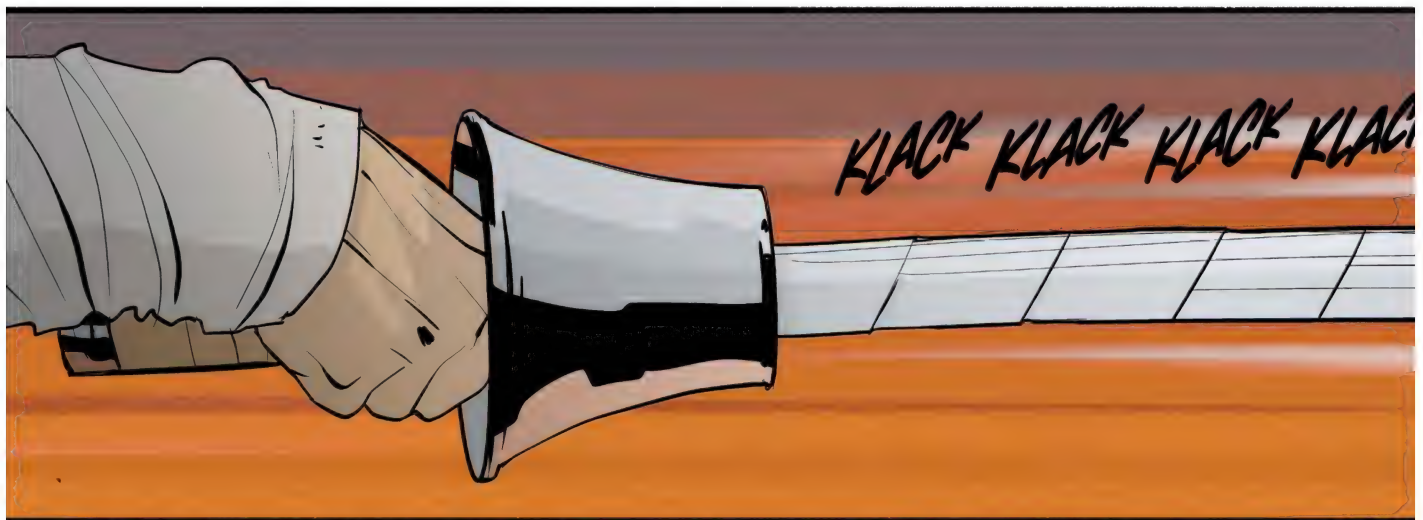


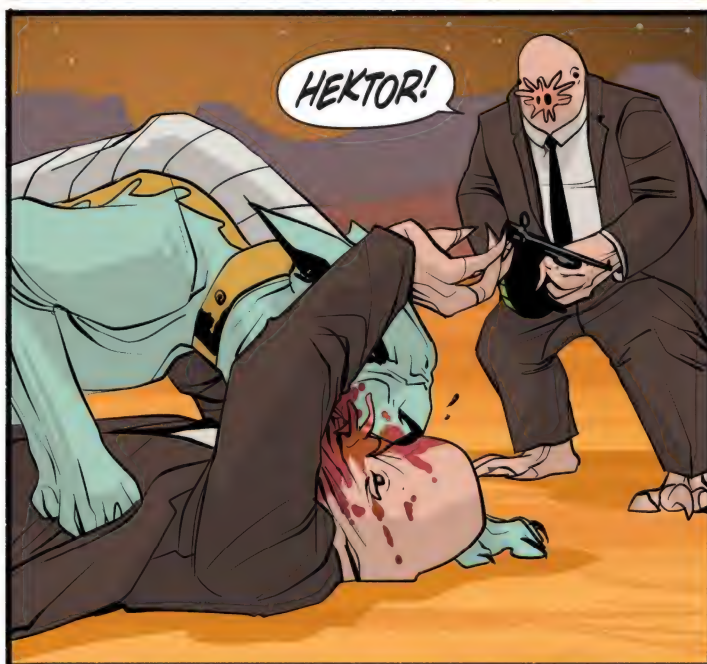
Grab your cat.

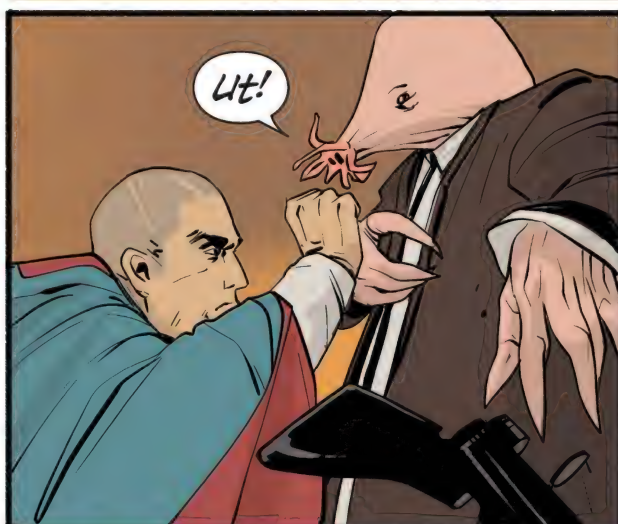
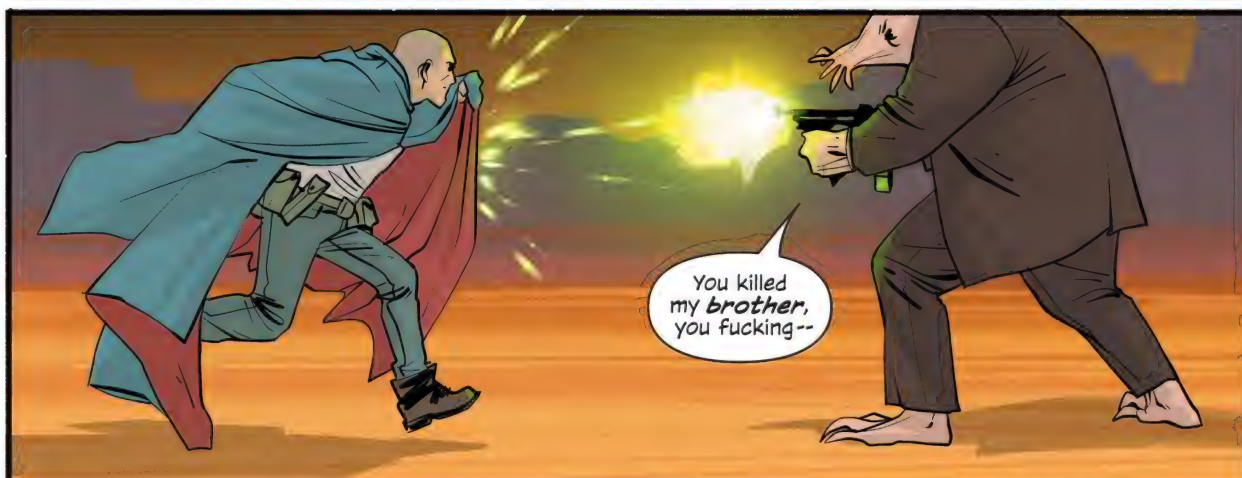
Let's get this nonsense over with.





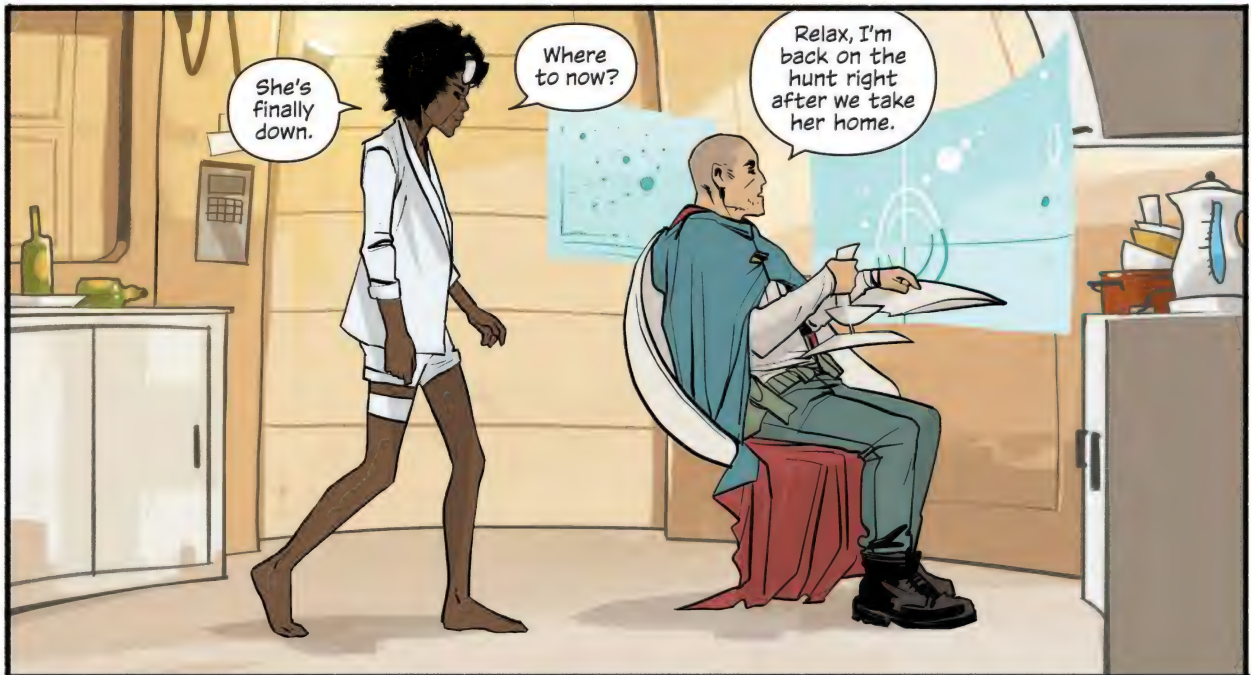
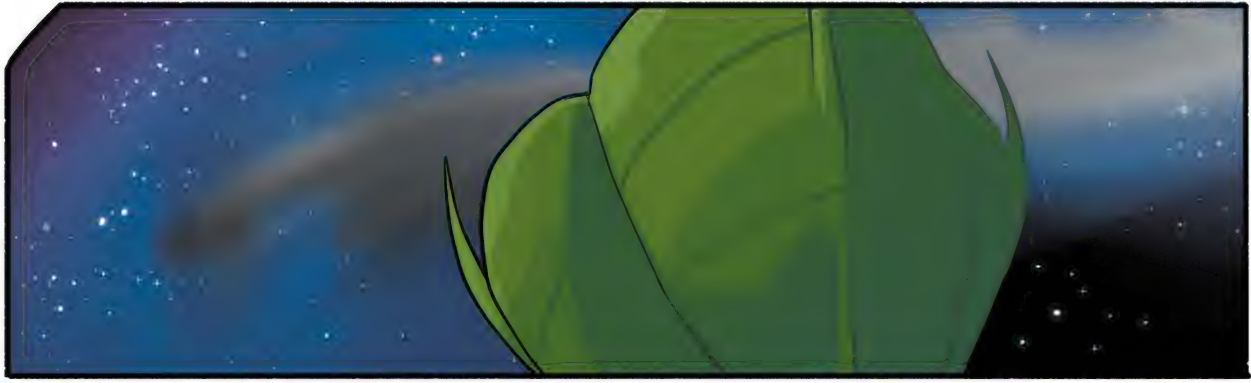
















Thataway.

TO BE CONTINUED

4335 VAN NUYS BOULEVARD • SUITE 332 • SHERMAN OAKS • CA 91403

Letters. We get letters. We get stacks and stacks of letters:

Hey Saga Folks!

I just wanted to write in and personally say thank you for putting out a very entertaining and original comic. I picked up the first volume and Chapter Seven at my local comic shop as an employee recommendation. I can't wait for the next issue.

I would have enjoyed putting a costume together for your cosplay request but finals are coming up and I just didn't have the time. I hope some other readers do though! I suppose I could just go to Goodwill and get an old TV set to put on my head. Hmm. Now where did my regal attire get away to...?

Thanks again,

Grayson

Penngrove, CA

Don't give up, Grayson! You and your fellow delinquent designers still have a whole month to get your act together and submit an entry to our first ever Ill-Advised Costume Contest (and now that Marko has met our Naked Giant, you know why it's so ill-advised).

Entries have already started pouring in, and they're pretty astounding/hilarious. You guys are clearly investing some serious time and effort into your outfits, so we've decided to add a **FAT CA\$H MONEY AWARD** to the festivities. Along with the original Fiona sketch of you in your costume, our rare variant issues, and the even rarer original hard copy of the first script, our first place winner will now also receive a check for **FIVE HUNDRED BUCKS** (AMERICAN).

Trust us, the winner is gonna deserve it.

And because literally every single one of you costumers has complained about my archaic postal demands, photos of you in your getup can now be electronically mailed (!!) directly to a less technologically flummoxed member of the team at: SagaCostumeContest@gmail.com (though please note that all other letters for *To Be Continued* still need to go through the unstable wormhole that is the U.S. Postal Service).

Anyway, speaking of Chapter Seven's Naked Giant, let's get straight to the elephantiasis in the room:

Dear BKV,

After a long absence from comic books, I was intrigued enough by the cover of Saga Chapter Seven to purchase the issue. Boy, was I glad that I did! Words cannot express my gratitude to the entire team for creating this masterpiece and sharing it with the world.

Saga Chapter Seven was a bright light from a dimension of pure goodness. Reading it produced an awakening in my soul. I resolved a lot of childhood issues. I no longer suffer from agoraphobia or bedwetting. Saga Chapter Seven prevents SIDS. I believe the crisis in the Middle East is nearing

a peaceful resolution thanks to you. Instead of celebrating holidays, from now on I will celebrate Saga. This issue is the best hope for ending homelessness, hunger, and depression.

The best part? I'm only halfway through the issue! As long as there's nothing offensive like a giant naked triclops in the second half, you've hit a home run!

Love,

Vida Van Daugh

Maryland

Dear Brian & Fiona,

Regarding Saga #7, page 16.

Jesus!

Massive, naked tri-clops.

Hideous.

Perfect in context.

Perfectly hideous.

How am I going to scrub the pustule-ridden man-sac from my brain?

Gah!

Frank Smith

Indianapolis, IN

P.S. I love this comic: art, story, color, dialogue, lettering.

You all rock!

BKV and company,

I'm one of those surely many who picked up the trade of issues 1-6 and got hooked. I picked up issue 7 this week and I have a few words for you: "Giant Nasty Balls." I'm curious, did you (BKV) write in that the monster had these immense gruesome testicles, or did Fiona take it upon herself to make this giant triclops's nethers a train wreck? Either way, good job. I identified with Marko a lot there. If it were my mother underneath those things, I would be doing my damndest to shield her eyes. But, there are more substantial things this chapter, like meeting Marko's parents! I was surprised at how well his father was handling the entire thing. I'm still curious to see how the mother deals with her mongrel grandchild. Maybe she gets crushed by those aforementioned nasty giblets. What a way to go.

Fiona, I thought the horned dog was cute as hell. I might have to get some horns for my Corgi and pretend to do magic now. So, another thing I'm wondering (and I'm sure I won't get a straightforward answer) is if maybe in the future we'll see Marko cut his horns off to draw some attention away from them. That would certainly be a huge sacrifice, but he'd still have those ears so... never mind.

Well guys, I really just want to say that I love both your work on this, and I can't wait to keep reading.

Best of luck,

Andrew King

Goodview, VA

P.S. I'm sure you can tell I typed this on a relic from the past. I figured if Brian is allergic to the internet, I might as well keep computers out of this. My fiancée's grandfather was a typewriter repairman (talk about obsolete careers) and I had this thing lying around. Thanks again!!!!

Thanks for the perfectly typewritten letter, Andrew. And because a disturbing number of you asked to see this, I reluctantly present the infamous page of my script that Fiona executed so majestically:

Page Sixteen

Page Sixteen, SPLASH

I'm so sorry, but it's time for a psychologically scarring splash page. Fiona, feel free to take this monster in a completely different direction if you'd like, but my idea was to create the absolute LAST thing I'd like to encounter while hanging out with my mother.

So yeah, pull back so that Marko and his mom are just very tiny figures on the ground in the foreground of this shot. Looming over them is our roughly seventy-foot-tall monster: THE NAKED GIANT. The Naked Giant is pretty much what he sounds like, a creature who's too huge for any clothes to fit him. This is unfortunate, because I'm picturing the naked giant being a very fat humanoid creature, one whose big head seems to have sunk directly into his corpulent body. He has three bloodshot eyes and a giant mouth filled with multiple rows of rotting teeth. His weapon of choice is a CLUB made from a GIANT LEG BONE taken off the rotting corpse of another giant he ate a few weeks ago.

But like I say, the most horrific attribute of the Naked Giant is the fact that he is indeed nude. Despite his size, the giant's flaccid penis is rather small, and is mostly lost in a dense thicket of wiry pubic hair. Sadly, and I promise that I hate to type this, his testicles are NOT small. Instead, they are like two massive wrecking balls suspended in a wrinkly, sore-pocked scrotum that dangles all the way down to between the towering giant's knees. No wonder he looks so angry.

This moment should hopefully feel more viscerally disturbing than outright silly, Fiona, so please play it relatively "straight," if you think that's even possible here!

1) Marko: Mother, please.

Wow, my panel descriptions are not normally that creepily specific. Sorry again, everyone, especially Fiona's mother, who's unfortunately a loyal reader.

Moving on...

Dear Brian & Fiona,

I just finished reading Saga #1-6. The issues have been slowly piling up month after month as I ignored my comics in favor of television and my own writing. But it meant I got to spend a chunk of time reading a lovely story while covering my books with Goldfish cheese. Pretty good Saturday night if you ask me.

Anyway, I have just finished and had to go find my stationery collection so I could write to you (though it seems this card and

my Pixar postcard collection are all that remains after a year of writing letters and not buying new stationery).

Really the book was beautiful. The art was gorgeous and the story accomplishes that rare thing in comics where single issues stand out. I wanted to send something as a thank-you—these are two miniature paper cranes. It is a legend or saying or something that if you fold 1,000, you get to make a wish. It doesn't say you can't give any away.

Love,

Katie

Pittsburgh, PA

P.S. As per question #18 in the survey, I would choose my father as an island companion 1) because he's more resourceful than my mother and 2) I don't really care for him and would honestly not be too broken up if he had to die. I'm awful, I know.

Holy shit did Katie's letter take an unexpected dark turn at the end!

Hello!

I am currently deployed to Qatar but got forward deployed to Afghanistan to help out here. I am in the Air Force Security Forces and I really enjoy getting off shift and reading your comics. I read them digitally and I cannot explain my gratitude for you guys. Digital comics are so much easier to get here than ordering actual issues. THANK YOU! for the awesome comics (SAGA)!!

Airman First Class Taylor

You're very welcome, Airman.

And speaking of how hard it can be to get physical comics to people on active duty, the comics we promised Specialist Allen P. back in Chapter Seven's *To Be Continued* just got bounced back to us from Afghanistan. Hope all is okay with the Specialist, and if you're reading this now, please let us know which FOB we can find you at next.

Dear Brian,

I dig how you've made prose fiction writer D. Oswald Heist an important character in Saga, and it got me thinking about Saga's prose influences. What immortal works of literature inspire you? The critics point out Romeo and Juliet influences, but are there others?

I see Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* influence in Saga, not just the similar narrative techniques, but also in the characters' efforts to hold onto values that the universe constantly tries to subvert. Am I off the mark? Are there other literary influences?

Reed Beebe

Kansas City, MO

Hey again, Reed, and congrats on the epic Tharg stunt you pulled across multiple letter columns last year. That's some legendary letter hackery right there. (Oh, just Google it.)

And yeah, *To Kill a Mockingbird* has been a huge influence on my life, as well as pretty much every other book I read in eighth grade, especially *Animal Farm*, *Ender's Game*, *Misery*, *The Good Earth*, *Hitchhiker's Guide* and at least two stories in *The Further Adventures of the Joker* (a collection edited by Martin H. Greenberg).

Dear To Be Continued,

After what felt like a decade of crossovers, mega events, and continuity destroying re-starts, I felt disgusted and ultimately bored with the over-priced and throwaway comics being produced. Do you have any idea what it feels like to spend \$3.99 on a comic book that is not worth the glossy paper it is printed on? Then comes Saga...

Being a hardcore BKV fan and re-reading and collecting Y: The Last Man and Runaways, I was sold at the very first advertisement. Saga is a brilliant story with art that looks like it should be framed and mounted. I tried to look for something negative to say, but I just couldn't find anything. This is a book I would gladly pay \$3.99 for the privilege of reading (just don't tell the bigwigs at Image).

With that said, I would love for you to come to Pittsburgh with Fiona Staples for an awesome Q & A session. I'll even treat you both to a Primanti Bros. sandwich and a hockey game. Speaking of hockey, any chance in your infinite wisdom and power to end the NHL lockout? Comic books and hockey is pretty much all I live for. I have attached my prized photo with Stanley, my best friend.

Daniel Bellay

Fairmont, WV

[Attached: Photo of sender with the Stanley Cup]

Thanks for the generous assessment of our book, Daniel. I don't know anything about hockey or this so-called lockout, but let me make some calls, see what I can do.

Dear Mr. Vaughan,

Salutations! One brief question: How is it possible that you are giving us such a great product at so low a price? I mean, there aren't even ads on the back cover! Thank you (and Ms. Staples too) for an undivided, immersive story that is only interrupted by my frustration every Wednesday between issues of Saga.

I hope this next sentence doesn't come off as fanatical. You were in a dream of mine. Before you feed this letter to your dog out of fear of having another stalker, understand that I am in no way trying to replace you with a robot that only responds to my voice that I definitely not building in my attic. In my dream I was eating dinner at some fancy, hoity-toity dig when you sat down in the seat next to me. I was naturally speechless, and you had a full beard with your signature chrome dome (very stylish!). That was about it.

It is now my goal to meet you. Shake your hand if you are up to it.

I am writing this to you on my grandfather's stationery. He passed some thirty years ago. I never met him, but I understand he was a great man. He left troubled Yugoslavia in the 1950s to start a career and family in the good ol' Midwest America. I only wish the rest of my life will be as glamorous a story as his and the ones you expertly weave.

I am also sending a few booklets from my scouting days to help you, Hamburger K V, and whoever else you see fit to prepare for whatever is to come.

Happy Thanksgiving and Merry End of the World,

Wm Riley Leitch

Mattoon, IL

What the hell, Hamburger? Riley included scouting manuals

on dog care and shotgun safety. He wrote on his dead Yugoslavian grandfather's stationery. He dreamt of a bearded me. How is that not letter of the month...?

Hi, Brian and Fiona,

You asked in issue 7 whether any families were sharing the uniquely wrong experience of reading Saga together. Well, I'd have thought a lot of families would read it—it is, after all, a family book. Not for young families, sure, but about one. Saga is all about what you're willing to sacrifice for your family. Marko and Alana are giving up their homes for Hazel. Marko has to surrender his vow of non-violence. Prince Robot IV is hunting these fugitives across the universe so that he can return home to his unborn child. The Will has no family (that we know of) so has nothing to lose—which might be the scariest thing of all.

As for my family, my father had to sacrifice his comic book collection when I was born so that he could, you know, feed and clothe me and all that jazz. I grew up hearing the tales of Watchmen and The New Teen Titans told from his memory. Most girls had bedtime stories about Princesses—I had Caped Crusaders. So when I got older and started getting into comics (I was in my early 20s before I dared set foot in a comic book store), I was more than happy to return the favor. Every time I visit home I come with a stack of comics I think my Dad would like, and luckily we both have the same excellent taste. I couldn't wait to give him Saga #1, and now he pesters me for the latest issues. And hey, all that violence and sex and giant scrotums is no problem. Once you've sat through an episode of True Blood with your father, comic book sex just isn't embarrassing anymore (although all our True Blood viewing is now safely conducted 250 miles apart).

So thanks for producing a family comic which this family, at least, can enjoy—without having to make any bloody sacrifices.

Keep up the good work!

Best wishes,

Abigail Chandler

London, UK

P.S. Love you too, Mum. I haven't forgotten you. It's not my fault you raised a comic book geek—it's Dad's fault. Blame him.

Okay, yeah, this letter does kinda wipe out those bad-dad vibes from Katie's letter.

Abigail, I now see why Hamburger K. Vaughan has selected YOU as this month's lucky recipient of some bric-a-brac from the Almighty Prize Drawer: a signed copy of this very issue, an old pass to some off-brand Laser Tag place, an ERF postcard signed by Garth Ennis & Rob Steen, a plastic Legion Flight Ring, Buffy Cazavampiros, the awesome-sounding Spanish edition of my Buffy the Vampire Slayer arc with Georges Jeanty, and some creepy paper cranes that fell out of Katie's aforementioned letter.

Well, I'd say that's more than enough transcribing for one night. See you next month, when a certain ectoplasmic babysitter finally returns to the fold... but at what cost?!? (Spoiler Alert: About nine dollars an hour.)

Letteeeeeeeeeeeeeeeers,

Brian

Question of the Month

"WHAT IS YOUR COMICS NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION?"

To better recognize how appreciative I am to be working for Image. It's so easy to get caught up in the next issue and project — you lose sight of where you are.

MICHAEL MORECI
HOAX HUNTERS

To try writing in at least two new genres.

JAMES ASMUS
THIEF OF THIEVES,
THE END TIMES OF BRAM & BEN

Same as always — do more pages!

ANDRE SZYMANOWICZ
HELL YEAH

NO MORE MUTANTS.

ROB GUILLORY
CHEW

JANUARY 2013

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THE THIRD DEGREE PAUL POPE

PAUL POPE is an American cartoonist living and working in New York City. He has been working primarily in comics since the early '90s. His iconic *Batman: Year 100*, a science fiction take on the classic Batman origin tale, has won numerous awards, seen print in many languages, and appears frequently on many Top 10 Batman story lists. In 2010, Pope was recognized as a Master Artist by the American Council Of The Arts, and is currently sitting on the ACA advisory board. His 2010, short science fiction comic strip *Strange Adventures* (DC Comics) -- an homage to the Flash Gordon serials of the '30s -- won the coveted National Cartoonist Society's Reuben Award for Best Comic Book of the year.

What are you working on right now?

I just wrapped *Battling Boy* for First Second. I have a few dogs in the film fight, let's see if those things pan out. I am immediately moving onto my book *Psychonaut*, for Dargaud, my French publisher. A book about dreams and Carl Jung's theories of dream interpretation.

What's the best part of your job?

The war of art....! It's not always easy, but it's a good fight. So glad people care enough to pay attention.

What's the worst part of your job?

The uncertainty and the isolation. Social anxiety. That's probably just the human condition, though.

How did you first discover comics?

1975. I had the flu. I was five. My pop came back from hockey camp in Ontario with a big busted lip under his moustache and a copy of Kirby's *Bring On The Badguys*. I fell in love with Thor and Doctor Doom. I started drawing superheroes on my bedsheets right after that with a blue Bic marker.

If you weren't working in comics, what would you be doing?

I don't know. It's hard to imagine doing anything else....

What's the best thing a fan has ever said to you?

Probably the times you meet someone who says they read your books with their kids. That is really meaningful. I like meeting people, everyone has something to say.

I did, however, just find out that I met Jordie Bellaire, colorist on *Mara*, at some show when she was THIRTEEN and sold her a copy of one of my books. I've never felt older.

Who is the biggest influence on your work?

My influences would include Moebius, Alex Toth, Kirby, Crepax....Frank Miller and Jeff Smith....Picasso.

What is the single work of which you're most proud?

I'd say *Battling Boy*, since it is the most vital and fresh for me. I keep trying to improve.

Own up to one of your guilty pleasures.

I love Bing Crosby Christmas tunes. I love walking in the snow and having cold feet. I love the corny Japanese Moog composer Isao Tomita.

What was the last comic book you bought?

I bought the recent Dark Horse collection of Richard Corben's work for *Eerie* and *Creepy*....that is some amazing stuff.

If you could be someone else for a day, who would it be?

Honestly, I'd not change places with anybody.... If I could have dinner with someone, I'd think Mark Twain or maybe Orson Wells or Mickey Rourke or Nick Cave might be good company.

Pick three things you couldn't live without.

Family, Health, Music.

What's the strangest thing you have in your house?

My lady is a circus performer and builds her own rigs. At the moment, we have an 8 foot tall metal crescent moon with LED displays set up in the living room.

What makes you laugh?

I love the dumb jokes kids tell, like, "two sausages are in a frying pan...." Jokes like that.

What is one of your favorite places?

The Island Capri off the coast of Italy. Tokyo. NYC. Ontario. Alaska.

What music are you listening to these days?

I listen a lot lately to Einstürzende Neubauten, Alice Coltrane, Beethoven, Grinderman, and Ravi Shankar.

What is your favorite film of all time?

A tough one...I would likely say *Andrei Rublev*, by Tarkovsky. Close seconds-- *Ran* by Kurosawa, Kubrick's *The Shining*. *Holy Mountain* by Jodorowsky.

Who is your best friend?

Kostas, Harvest, and Pascoe. Scott. Erika.

What is the best advice you've ever received?

"No masterpiece was ever created by a lazy artist" --Salvador Dali

When was the last time you were truly frightened?

Anytime I'm in a car or on an airplane.

Who is someone you really admire?

Muhammad Ali, Louise Nevelson, Nick Cave, Picasso, Jeff Smith. Miles Davis. Ursula LeGuin. Ian Astbury. Kostas Seremetis.

What would you like to see happen in comics in the next 12 months?

I want to see more badass comics, more artists and writers taking the wheel of their own ships, more editors and publishers backing new dreams and visions, more young people getting into comics, both as readers and as makers.

INVINCIBLE #100



10th ANNIVERSARY LANDMARK 100th ISSUE SPECTACULAR! It's all been building to this. Mark Grayson's entire life as a superhero, all he's learned, all he's endured, it's all been leading to this one moment. Will he become the hero he was meant to or will he choose... a DIFFERENT path? The aftermath of this EXTRA-SIZED issue will shock you.

ONE TRICK RIP-OFF/DEEP-CUTS HC



Young lovers Tubby and Vim want to escape - escape the mistakes they've made, the lives they've lived, and the dirty city weighing them down. Their plan is simple - all they have to do is rip-off the One Tricks - the toughest street gang in LA. If they pull it off, they're set for life. If not, their lives won't matter much anyway.

DIA DE LOS MUERTOS #1 (OF 3)



Artist extraordinaire RILEY ROSSMO joins forces with nine different writers over three issues to tell tall tales from beyond the grave! A mariachi falls in love with a woman who looks like his lost love, a father is abused by a poltergeist, and a girl whose mother died when she was born visits the land of the dead in her dreams.

THE END TIMES OF BRAM & BEN #1 (OF 4)



What would you do if you were caught in the Biblical End Times? When Heaven raptures total bastard Bram Carlson in a "clerical error" - he's sent back and immediately uses Armageddon to his benefit! Can his anxious roommate Ben save Bram from himself - AND the gathering forces of Armageddon?

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A photograph of Paul Pope, a man with dark, wavy hair, wearing a grey t-shirt and jeans, looking down at his hands in a workshop. In the background, there is a poster of Michael Jackson playing a guitar. The text "PAUL POPE" is overlaid in large, white, bold, sans-serif capital letters.

PAUL POPE

ONE TRICK RIP-OFF



JANUARY

WHO'S NEXT

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